

Transportation Safety

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

Policy: 100.0110

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Version: 4

The Department will make every effort to ensure the safety of staff and the children and families we serve during the course of Departmental transportation.

Rhode Island General Law (RIGL) 31-22-22 mandates that all motor vehicle operators and passengers wear safety belts or be properly restrained in federally approved restraint systems. Certain seating positions and uses of safety belts or restraint systems are determined by the age, height and weight of the passenger.

- Child under the age of seven, less than fifty-four (54) inches in height and less than eighty (80) pounds, must be transported in the back seat of the vehicle in a child restraint system appropriate for child's age and size.
- Child under the age of seven, but at least fifty-four (54) inches in height or at least eighty (80) pounds, must be transported in the back seat of the vehicle in a child restraint system appropriate for child's age and size or properly wearing a safety belt and/or shoulder harness.

The Department takes a proactive stance regarding child safety and requires the following enhancements to the minimum legal mandates.

- Child between the ages of seven and thirteen must be transported in the back seat of the vehicle, properly wearing a safety belt and/or shoulder harness, unless all seats in the rear are already occupied by other children.

In addition to seat belt and child passenger restraint usage, Department policy requires the following to ensure the safety and confidentiality of the children and families receiving DCYF services.

- Child must never be left alone in an automobile.
- Staff transporting child must receive the child directly from and return the child directly to caretaker unless a different plan has been agreed upon by worker and caretaker.
- Staff must immediately notify the local police department if a child or youth runs away while being transported.
- Staff must not be accompanied by family members or friends.
- Smoking is prohibited in State vehicles used by DCYF staff.

Related Procedure...

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Procedure From Policy 100.0110: Transportation Safety

- A. Departmental staff must follow the procedures relating to the use of seat belts and child restraint systems listed below during all transports:
 - 1. All employees are required to use safety belts.
 - 2. All passengers riding in any vehicle operated by an employee of DCYF are required to wear safety belts or be properly restrained in approved child restraint systems. Certain seating positions and uses of safety belts or restraint systems are determined by the age, height and weight of the passenger.
 - a. Child under the age of seven, less than fifty-four (54) inches in height and less than eighty (80) pounds, must be transported in the back seat of the vehicle in a child restraint system appropriate for child's age and size.
 - b. Child under the age of seven, but at least fifty-four (54) inches in height or at least eighty (80) pounds, must be transported in the back seat of the vehicle in a child restraint system appropriate for child's age and size or properly wearing a safety belt and/or shoulder harness.
 - c. Child between the ages of seven and thirteen must be transported in the back seat of the vehicle, unless other children already occupy all seats in the rear. Child must be wearing a safety belt and/or shoulder harness.
 - d. Youth thirteen years of age or older may be in front or back seat and properly wearing a safety belt and/or shoulder harness.
 - 3. The following exceptions to 1 and 2 above apply:
 - a. Possession of written verification from a licensed physician that the employee or passenger is unable to use a seat belt for physical or medical reasons
 - b. Passenger motor vehicles manufactured before July 1, 1966
 - c. Motor vehicles not required by federal law to have seat belts
- B. Departmental staff must follow procedures listed below to ensure the safety and confidentiality of the children and families receiving DCYF services.
 - 1. Child should never be left alone in an automobile.
 - a. Staff should never leave any child in DCYF care, regardless of age, alone in an automobile.
 - b. State law (RIGL 31-22-22.1) authorizes law enforcement officers to provide a verbal warning to any person who leaves a child under the age of seven unattended in a motor vehicle to inform that person of the dangers of this practice.
 - 2. Staff transporting child must receive the child directly from and return the child directly to caretaker unless worker and caretaker have agreed upon a different plan.
 - 3. Staff should ensure that all doors are locked before the transport begins.
 - 4. Staff must immediately notify the local police department if a child or youth runs away while being transported.
 - a. During standard working hours, notification must be made to the primary service worker and/or supervisor.
 - b. During non-standard working hours, notification must be made to the Call Floor.
 - 5. Staff should not be accompanied by family members or friends while transporting clients or while involved in agency business at designated client locations because of liability and confidentiality issues.
 - 6. Smoking is prohibited in State vehicles used by DCYF staff.